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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIGA 000361

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2018

TAGS: MARR PARM PREL PL LH LG

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE ON MISSILE DEFENSE PLANS

REF: VILNIUS 441

Classified By: DCM Stuart M Seldowitz. Reason: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 4.

¶2. (C) Press reports that the US was considering Lithuania as an alternative site for deployment of missile defense (MD) assets should negotiations with Poland fail have seen wide publication in the Latvian press on June 18. As a result, MOD State Secretary Rinkevics, recalling previous public statements by Latvian officials expressing a willingness to host elements of the MD system if needed, asked DATT for latest USG thinking on missile defense.

¶3. (C) We expect this to be only the first of many inquiries, both governmental and press. Given the discussions that the USG has had with Lithuania (reftel), we believe that we need to provide an updated view to the Latvians of our thinking. Even if the discussions in Lithuania were only superficial, the Latvians will be both nervous and jealous if they feel they are not being kept in the loop. If Latvia is not technically feasible as a site, we should let the Latvians know that as well. On the press side, we can expect more coverage in coming days, especially in the Russian language press, on this issue and we will need guidance both on overall MD plans but also guidance on what we can say about the possibility of using any of the Baltic states as sites.

¶4. (C) Action requested: Please provide points for use in engaging the Latvian government on our latest thinking on missile defense, including whether Latvia is even technically feasible as a host site. We expect whatever information we provide the GOL to quickly reach the highest levels of government. Please also provide latest press guidance, including on the potential of basing assets in either Lithuania or Latvia.

LARSON